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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY  
PROPOSED RIETVELD ENVIRONMENTAL  
CENTRE**

Prepared for

**CSIR ENVIRONMENTEK**

By

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The historical and archaeological elements of Table View combine to present opportunities for an enriching educational experience for the proposed Rietvlei Environmental Centre.

With regard to the proposed Rietvlei Environmental Centre, the following recommendations are made

- From an archaeological and paleontological perspective, all the potential development sites are preferred, as the likely surface impacts will be low to negligible.
- The establishment of a cultural-historical component as part of the proposed development scenario will add an additional educational experience to the planned development.
- A cultural component could, for example, include interactive archaeological, palaeontological and historical displays, exhibits and activities.
- The creation of exhibition and display 'space' for school projects celebrating cultural diversity

The following heritage management guidelines are recommended.

- An archaeological monitoring programme is recommended during implementation of the project. This includes monitoring activities such as earthmoving, vegetation clearing, and development of infrastructure and services in Site 2 only.
- The proposed development in Site 2 may also uncover or disturb human burial remains. Should any human remains be disturbed or uncovered during earthworks, these should immediately be reported to a professional archaeologist.
- The historic Rietvlei spring at Site 6 should be retained during any planned development of the site. Test excavations should also be carried out to try to identify the foundations and/or remains of the Rietvlei outpost. These excavations could perhaps form part of a practical historical excursion for scholars in the Table View area aimed at understanding the principles of archaeological excavation, as well as appreciating the historical and pre-colonial history of the region

The following palaeontological management guidelines are recommended.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background and brief**

The Agency for Cultural Resource Management has been requested by the CSIR Environmentek (Stellenbosch) to undertake a baseline archaeological and historical study of the proposed Rietvlei Environmental Centre (Williams 1998).

A baseline palaeontological study has been undertaken by Dr G. Avery of the South African Museum in Cape Town (Avery 1998, Appendix 1).

The aim of the archaeological study is to assess the archaeological, palaeontological, historical and cultural significance and sensitivity of the proposed sites (1-6), to identify opportunities that the archaeological and cultural-historical features of the site(s) have for the proposed development, and to propose measures to mitigate against any significant impacts arising out of the proposed development.

## **2. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The terms of reference for the baseline archaeological and palaeontological study were:

1. to describe the archaeological, historical and palaeontological context and features of the proposed sites;
2. to identify opportunities and constraints that the archaeological, historical and palaeontological features of the site have for the proposed development;
3. to identify the potential impacts or benefits of locating the proposed facility at the proposed sites (1-6);
4. to recommend mitigatory measures that will reduce significant impacts, or enhance benefits;
5. to recommend a preferred site(s), including possible additional sites; and
6. to recommend an appropriate scale of facilities and amenities that the proposed sites can sustain.

## **3. THE STUDY SITE**

The study site for the proposed Rietvlei Environmental Centre is the Rietvlei Wetland Reserve in Table View (Figure 1). Six sites have been identified for potential development.

#### **4. APPROACH TO THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL, AND PALAEOANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY**

The approach used in the baseline archaeological, historical and palaeontological study entailed a detailed foot survey of Sites 1-6. A desk-top study was also undertaken.

#### **5. A REGIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

##### **5.2 Archaeology**

The archaeological significance of the Table Bay region has been well documented. Rudner (1968) reported numerous shell middens and deflated sites with shellfish and pottery occurring in an almost continuous stretch among the frontal dunes, from Parden Eiland to Melkbosstrand. Many of these sites have since been lost as a result of land reclamation, and residential and recreational development.

The archaeological visibility of the region has also been described by Kaplan (1993, 1995, 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c in prep.), where more than 100 sites have been recorded and mapped. Archaeological excavations at Milnerton (Deacon & Goosen 1996) and Melkbosstrand (Kaplan 1998b, 1998d in prep.) have shown that indigenous San hunter-gatherers peopled the landscape more than 3000 years ago. Early Stone Age<sup>1</sup> (ESA) artefacts and fossils have also been collected on the beach near the mouth of the Milnerton lagoon (Avery 1995).

The early Dutch settlers at the Cape also encountered Khoisan communities on these shores living among the dunes, and made contact with them. There are historical accounts of Bushmen and 'Strandlopers' utilising the coastal resources along the beaches at this time.

The palaeontological significance of the region has also been noted (Avery 1995, 1998). According to Avery (1997:9), elephant tusks and other bones were recovered during the course of the dredging of the Rietvlei. The consultant was also shown fossil bones collected in the Rietvlei by Mr Wally Wolhuter the water ranger at Rietvlei.

At least 10 Khoisan and non-indigenous burials have also been recovered from the Milnerton/Melkbosstrand region (Abrahams 1983; Avery 1995; Kaplan 1996).

##### **5.3 Colonial history**

During the Dutch East India Company (VOC) period at the Cape, a number of forts and trading outposts were established in the Table Bay area, at Blouberg, Riet Valley, Vissershok and Jan Biesjes Craal (Milnerton).

The Riet Valley outpost was established before 1676, where thatching reed was cut for the company's buildings in Cape Town. A dairy was operated there on behalf of the Cape governors. The outpost also used as a camp for the Khoi regiment during the

<sup>1</sup> a term referring to the period between 2 million and 200 000 years ago.

first British occupation of the Cape (1795-1803), and as a base for General Janssens during the Battle of Blouberg (1806). In this battle, the VOC forces of General Janssens were defeated by a British expeditionary force, heralding the start of the second British occupation of the Cape. The battle was fought mainly on the eastern slopes of the Kleinberg (Blouberg Hill), on what is today the farm Bloubergsvlei.

Historical wells and freshwater springs were also excavated at Rietvlei, Bloubergsvlei and Blouberg.

According to Bruno Wertz (pers. comm.) of the Department of Archaeology, University of Cape Town, up to fifteen early shipwreck sites are located in Table Bay, and north of the mouth of the old Salt River. These include the wreck of the Nieuw Haerlem (1647) and the Oosterland (1697).

A brief chronological history of the Rietvlei has been described in a CSIR report on estuaries of the Cape (1988). These include early descriptions of the vlei in 1608, as well as references to the Zout Pan (Rietvlei) by van Riebeeck in 1653. The first farms were established in the area in 1690, while the first maps and survey plans were produced in 1786, 1806 and 1846 respectively. Jumping ahead, dredging of the Rietvlei to provide fill for the construction of container berths at Cape Town Harbour was completed in the 1970s, while the Rietvlei/Milnerton Lagoon was reserved as a nature area in 1982 (CSIR 1988).

## 6. RESULTS OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### Site 1

No archaeological, histocal or palaeontological remains were located in Site 1. The area is well vegetated resulting in low archaeological visibility. Some open spaces occur, as well as outcroppings of limestone (calcareous) deposits.

A large collection of Later Stone Age<sup>2</sup> (LSA) tools have been collected from a disturbed deflated site west of Site 1, alongside the boundary wall of residential properties bordering the Rietvlei Wetland Reserve, and about 100 metres north-east of the entrance to the Aquatic Centre, by Mr Wally Wolhuter, the Rietvlei water ranger.

Significance of site: low

Suggested mitigation: **none required**

### Site 2

Medium to low density scatters of shellfish remains, stone tools, pottery and ostrich eggshell were located during a study of Site 2. The archaeological remains were located mainly in the western portion of the site, in open spaces on the vegetated flat dune tops.

<sup>2</sup> a term referring to the last 20 000 years of precolonial history in southern Africa.

The low density shellfish remains with one or two stone flakes and chunks are associated with extensive dune mole rat activity which is widespread on the site.

One coherent, medium density scatter of shellfish remains, three pieces of pottery, some stone flakes and chunks, and two pieces of ostrich eggshell were located in a flat open space in Site 2 (Figure 2). Plastic, glass, bottles and a pair of rubber gloves occur on the site, which has also recently been burnt. The site (RV1), measures about 4 metres radius. Considerable disturbance has taken place around the site.

No palaeontological or historical remains were located in Site 2.

Significance of sites: **medium to low**

Suggested mitigation: **none required**

#### **Site 3**

No archaeological, palaeontological or historical remains were located in Site 3. A few stone flakes were, however, located on the shoulder of the dirt road accessing the site from Otto du Plessis Drive. The site itself is well vegetated resulting in low archaeological visibility. Some open spaces occur in places.

Significance of site: **low**

Suggested mitigation: **none required**

#### **Site 4**

A few stone flakes were located east of the canal in Site 4. Large amounts of rubble have been brought into the area as fill, and the area is already severely disturbed. Archaeological visibility west of the canal is low and no archaeological remains were located.

No palaeontological or historical remains were located in Site 4.

Significance of site: **low**

Suggested mitigation: **none required**

#### **Site 5**

No archaeological, palaeontological or historical remains were located in Site 5. Significant disturbance has already taken place. Some fragmented shell was noted in the eroding southern bank of the spur, but is not of an archaeological nature.

Significance of site: **low**

Suggested mitigation: **none required**

## Site 6

The Rietvei outpost was established before 1676 on Site 6 by the Dutch East India Company (VOC), where thatching reed was cut for the company's buildings in Cape Town. A dairy was operated from the outpost on behalf of the Cape governors by among others, Wolraad Woltemade. The outpost was also used as a camp for the Khoi regiment during the first British occupation of the Cape (1795-1803), and as a base for General Janssens during the Battle of Blouberg (1806).

The outpost has long since been destroyed by residential property development in the area, but according to Ms Pat Matejek (pers. comm.), a milk cooling room was located during historical research at the site, which was now been landscaped over by a residential property bordering the site.

The historic Rietvei spring is also located at Site 6. Porcelain dating to the mid 17th century, and bone was recovered during partial dredging of the spring in 1994 (Pat Matejek, pers. comm.). A collection of porcelain, broken clay pipe stems and pipe bowls have also been collected from the site by Mr Wolhuter (pers comm.) and a Ms Hartman.

The Table View Ranger Guides (1994) have also undertaken detailed historical research of the spring. According to Ms Matejek (pers. comm.), a human burial was also recovered during construction of Grey Avenue adjacent to Site 6.

A few pieces of porcelain were located by the consultant in the sandy flower beds alongside the driveway above the spring.

No archaeological or palaeontological remains were located in Site 6.

Significance of site: **high**

**Suggested mitigation: the historic Rietvei spring should be retained during any planned development of the site. Test excavations should be carried out to try to identify the foundations and/or remains of the Rietvei outpost. These excavations could perhaps form part of a practical historical excursion for scholars in the Table View area, aimed at understanding the principles of archaeological excavation, as well as appreciating the historical and pre colonial history of the region .**

## 7. IMPACT STATEMENT

The impact of the proposed development of the Rietvei Environmental Centre on archaeological sites in Sites 1, 3, 4, 5 is considered to be low to negligible. The impact of the proposed development on archaeological sites in Site 2 is considered to be high. The majority of occurrences, however, comprise low density or marginal scatters of fragmented shellfish remains with few cultural artefacts present, in mostly severely disturbed context. These remains have been given low significance ratings. The impact

of the proposed development on the Rietvlei spring (Site 6) may be high. The site has been given a high significance rating.

The impact of the proposed Rietvlei Environmental Centre development on palaeontological sites or remains in Sites 1-6, is considered to be low (Avery 1998).

## **8. LEGISLATION**

All archaeological, palaeontological and historical sites are protected by the National Monuments Act (Act No. 28 of 1969 as amended). It is an offence to disturb, remove or destroy from its original site, or excavate any such site without a permit from the National Monuments Council.

Human burial remains are also protected under the National Monuments Act, and the Human Tissues Act.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

With regard to the proposed Rietvlei Environmental Centre, the following recommendations are made:

- From an archaeological, palaeontological and historical perspective, all the potential development sites are preferred, as the likely impacts will be low to negligible.
- The establishment of a cultural-historical component as part of the overall development scenario will add an additional enriching educational experience to the planned development.
- A cultural component would include interactive archaeological, palaeontological and historical displays, exhibits and activities.
- The creation of exhibition and display 'space' for school projects celebrating cultural diversity.



The following heritage management guidelines are recommended.

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## 10. REFERENCES

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